

What consumers should know

The Federal Trade Commission requires that companies providing services through the use of 900 numbers must disclose specific information to consumers. These are the requirements:

All print, radio, and television advertisements for 900 number services MUST include:

- ⇒ The total cost of the call if a flat fee is used.
- ⇒ The per-minute rate if the call is charged by the minute. If the length of the call is known in advance, the ad must disclose the cost.
- ⇒ The range of fees if there are different options.
- ⇒ The cost of any other 900 number to which you may be transferred.
- ⇒ The cost of other fees associated with the service such as membership or monthly fees.

PAY PER CALL and Information Services

Information providers (IPs) offer telephone callers a variety of services such as sports lines, psychic hotlines, sex lines, stock market lines and teen chat lines.

Usually such services are accessed by dialing a number with a 900 area code. Rates for these 900 number calls are higher than regular long distance charges. These calls are subject to a strict set of rules under Federal law.

The Federal Trade Commission (FTC) regulates these services and has set rules for these services. The FTC may be contacted by calling toll-free 877-382-4357.



**South Dakota
Public Utilities Commission**

900 Numbers



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Listen Closely

If a 900 number service is more than \$2, you should hear an introductory message stating the name of the company and the cost of the call. It must also state that minors need parental permission to complete the call. **The company does not have to get proof that the caller is not a minor or that parental permission has been granted.** The cost of the call must also be disclosed.

You have three seconds to hang up before charges are assessed.

Pre-existing Agreements

If you have previously used the services of a company providing 900 number service and have set up an arrangement, the company is not required to have an introductory message stating costs.

Billing

Check your billing. Each 900 number call should include the date, time, and length of call. These charges are listed separately from your long distance calls.



If you dispute any of the charges, follow the directions on your billing. A company cannot charge you to investigate the dispute.

Minors

Companies are prohibited from promoting 900 number services to children under the age of 12 unless the services are educational. If ads are directed to minors under the age of 18, the ad must state that parental permission is required to make the call.

South Dakota Public Utilities Commission

State Capitol Building
500 East Capitol
Pierre SD 57501

Call: 800-332-1782
<http://www.state.sd.us/puc>

Tips

- ♦ Get a 900 number block from your local telephone company if you wish to avoid these types of charges or services.
- ♦ Even if you are promised a "free prize" if you call a 900 number, you will be charged a per minute fee while you are claiming the prize.
- ♦ Information services are rarely free even if toll free numbers are provided.
- ♦ Be cautious of advertisements which offer information services with "Ordinary Toll Rates Apply" or "International Toll Rates Apply." These rates may be much higher than your regular long distance company would charge.
- ♦ Instruct children or other individuals who make phone calls from your telephone line about the charges associated with information service calls.